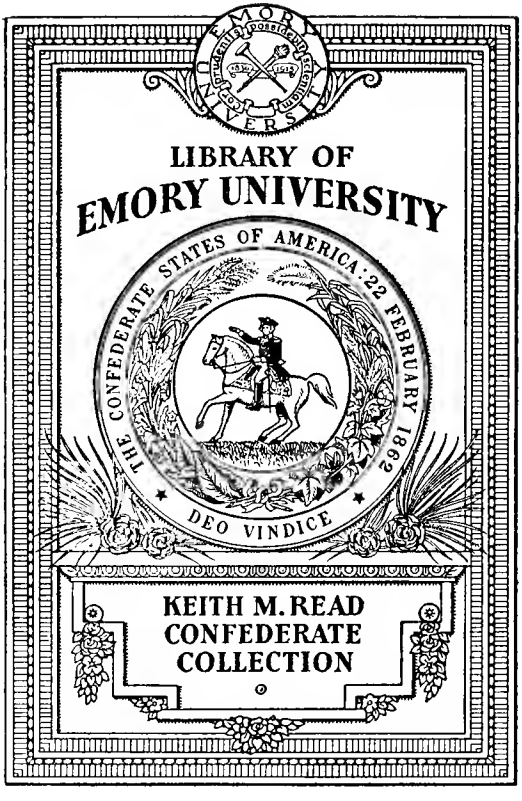
A SERMON

PREACHED TO

The Pulaski Guards.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The Silver Trumpets of the Sanctuary.

A SERMON

PREACHED TO

THE PULASKI GUARDS

IN

CHRIST CHURCH, SAVANNAH,

ON THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

BEING THE SUNDAY BEFORE THEIR DEPARTURE TO JOIN THE ARMY IN VIRGINIA,

BY THE

RT. REV. STEPHEN ELLIOTT, D. D.,

RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST

SAVANNAH:
STEAM PRESS OF JOHN M. COOPER & COMPANY.
1861.

A Sermon.

NUMBERS X.: 9.—"*And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies.*"

The children of Israel were led out of their captivity by the outstretched arm of Jehovah himself. He was their pillar of cloud by day, and their pillar of fire by night. He was not only their God, but their King. He made their laws; He guided their armies; He arranged every matter, not only of religious worship but of civil and military discipline, and, among other things, he instituted the usage to which our text refers. He ordered Moses to make two silver trumpets, which were to be blown upon certain occasions, by no less persons than the sons of Aaron, the Priests of the Sanctuary. One of these occasions was when their armies went out to battle, that they might be animated and encouraged in the fight, and brought to the remembrance of the Lord for salvation from their enemies. In this way was war consecrated by religion, and the heart of courage was lighted anew from the altar of God, and the arm of valor was strengthened by the knowledge that they were daily borne upon the wings of prayer before Him whose power no creature is able to resist.

But it was only one species of war which was thus surrounded with the holiness of religious blessing. These trumpets were not to be blown when their armies were mustered for a war of conquest, nor when they gathered themselves together for an alliance with the nations which surrounded them, but only when they went to war in their own land against the enemy that oppressed them. The war which this usage hallow-

ed and sanctified, was a strictly defensive war, one waged for a nation's rights against invasion and oppression. "And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets." Under these circumstances, children of Israel, is the paraphrase of the promise, ye may go to battle without any fear, and strike boldly for your homes and your altars without any guilt. The right, in such case of self-defence, will be on your side, and God sitteth in the throne judging right. The church will sound the trumpets that shall summon you to the battle, and God dwelleth in the sanctuary between the Cherubim. The congregation will remember you at the morning and the evening sacrifice, and the High Priest will remember you when he sprinkles the blood of atonement before the Mercy seat, and God will remember you because of his everlasting covenant with you, and will save you from your enemies.

This close connexion between God and his people has ceased with the incoming of Christ, and the Gospel is, in many respects, a very different system from the Law. But while different, it is yet the same. It is the perfect development of a Divine scheme, and therein it differs as a full-blown flower differs from its bud. It is the full exhibition to man of a plan of mercy which the Law shrouded under types and shadows, and therein it differs as a landscape, flooded with light, differs from one seen obscurely through the morning's dawn. It is the spiritualizing of a Divine intercourse with man, which, under the Law, was carried on by sensible symbols, and therein it differs, as the etherial flash of thought from the slow communication by signs. But its moral principles remain the same, for the Law, comprised in the Ten Commandments, delivered from Mount Sinai, is still our rule of right and wrong. Christ spiritualized it, and thus made it more comprehensive, but he did not alter it. What was morally wrong under the Law, is morally wrong now—what was morally right then, is morally right now. The principles of God's immutable morality nothing can change—no lapse of time—no alteration of dispensations—no mutation of name or nation.

Christian morals stand upon no stronger basis than Israelitish morals, for those rested upon the word of the unchangeable I AM. If defensive war was right then, it is right now; and surely it must have been right when God himself commanded the battle shout to be sounded from his own sanctuary, and promised that he himself would take part in it, and save his people from their enemies.

It is a great error to suppose that our Lord taught the world to believe that his Gospel would make wars to cease over the earth. He knew too well that the wrong must ever battle against the right, and so he said: "I come not to bring peace, but a sword." The principles of his doctrine must necessarily modify the horrors of war, and leaven that fearful scourge with humanity and mercy, but it was never the teaching of Him, who foretold that wars and rumors of wars should be among the most notable signs of the coming of the Day of Judgment, that they would ever blot it out. In the Apocalypse, that prophetic roll of the world's history, whose leaves we are perpetually deciphering under the march of events, conflict succeeds conflict, up to the very moment when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and warriors, with garments rolled in blood, usher in its terrors. Great as is the glory of the Gospel—unspeakable as are its mercies and its blessings—they will never rid us of the curse which God has stamped upon the world. War will ever, while the world endures, mingle its miseries with that full tide of sorrow which sin has brought upon mankind. When sickness shall cease, when sorrow shall cease, when affliction shall cease, when poverty shall cease, then will war cease, for they are all only branches of the same root of evil which nothing can eradicate from the earth. Christ has limited their duration, but that limit is coeval with the world's existence. When the heavens and the earth, that now are, shall pass away, there shall arise new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and therein shall be no more curse. All evil will cease, because all sin will cease, and together shall all man's enemies be cast into outer darkness.

But, while this is so, another question may press itself upon the tender conscience and give it embarrassment. While, as is evident, wars will continue unto the end, is there anything in the Gospel which forbids a Christian man from bearing arms and fighting in his country's service? We unhesitatingly answer, that there is nothing; no shadow of a prohibition where the war is defensive. In the Gospel, as in the Law, when Christian men "go to war in their land against the enemy that oppresseth them," they may go with the certain assurance that they are doing no wrong, that they are acting according to the purest reason, and that nothing can be found in the word of God which shall condemn them. "Whatsoever is absolutely necessary, says Jeremy Taylor, is certainly lawful; and since Christ hath nowhere forbidden kings to defend themselves and their people against violence, in this case there is no law at all to be considered; since there is a right of nature, which no law of God hath restrained; and, by that right, all men are on an equal footing, and, therefore, if they be not safe from injury, it is their own fault, or their own unhappiness; they may if they will, and if they can; and they have no measures in this, but that they take care they be defended and quit from the danger, and no more."—vol. XII: 448-449, (Heber's edition.) This is the abstract argument derived from the silence of our Lord, but there are indications in the New Testament that the profession of a soldier was not contrary to the doctrine of Christ. When John the Baptist came rebuking sin in the spirit and power of Elijah—the sternest of all the ancient prophets—and preparing the way of the Lord, the soldiers demanded of him, "And what shall we do?" And he said unto them, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." Not a word against the lawfulness of their occupation; not a word indicating that He was near at hand who would strike by his Gospel at the root of their profession, but simply an injunction to observe in their conduct the principles of mercy, of justice, and of obedience. And if it be said, that this answer was given by John ere yet the Holy Spirit had been sent

by our ascended Lord to guide his people into all truth, we have the yet stronger case of Cornelius, an officer of the Roman army, in active service, whose history is contained, singularly enough, in the second lesson of the morning service. As a soldier and an officer he had served God earnestly, so that the writer of the Acts of the Apostles calls him "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, and gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." His position did not interfere with his religion, nor did it hinder the grace of God, for that found him in the daily performance of a soldier's duty, and an angel of God was commissioned to say unto him, "Thy prayers and thine arms are come up for a memorial before God;" and he was chosen to be the first Gentile convert, and to illustrate the divine truth that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. The baptism of God came upon him, although a soldier, and then followed the baptism of man, and we are nowhere instructed that because he became a Christian, therefore he ceased to be a soldier. And in one of the early apologies for Christianity, we hear Tertullian saying to the Roman Emperor: "We, Christians, fill your cities, your islands, your towns, your boroughs, your camp, your senate, and your forum." And this could not have been true, had the early Church forbidden her communicants to enter into service as soldiers. The military life seems to have been treated by Christ as was every other department of domestic and social arrangement. It was placed by him upon its proper principles, and his spirit was left in the world to work, silently yet surely, its conformity to those principles. He never denounced it, although his Gospel was come to preach peace on earth, good will towards men.

Upon these principles, soldiers, I feel that the trumpets may sound in your behalf from the sanctuary of God, and that you may go where duty calls you, believing that you will be remembered before the Lord your God, and your country saved from its enemies. The conflict in which you are about to mingle is one waged upon the holiest grounds of self-preservation and self-defence. Everything most dear and sacred

to every one of us is involved in it. We are contending for SECURITY, the object of all government and law and the basis of all domestic and social happiness. In ancient times, nations contended for conquest, for dominion, for spoils; in modern times, they contend for security. That phrase, which for some centuries, has moulded the politics of Europe—the balance of power—is no idle figment; it rests upon this very necessity for security among the nations which insist upon its preservation. Nearly all the later wars of England have turned upon this very point, that she might be secure in her interests from the ambition of powerful or jealous neighbors, and might prevent any one of the great powers from accumulating too much territory or too much influence. Hence the pertinaciousness with which she hung upon the skirts of the first Napoleon, and the jealousy with which she watches all the movements of his successor. For, without security, there can be no growth in any of the elements of a people's greatness—no accumulation of capital—no advancement in arts or elegance—no independence of thought or feeling—nay, no comfort abroad or at home. No people can be happy or contented, can feel any self-respect, or deserve any respect from others, who are not secure in their rights or property. The consciousness that they are consenting to live in a state of sufferance humiliates them and unfits them for self-government. They lose the spirit of independence; they forfeit their place in the rank of nations, and as inevitably as the brave man holds dominion over the coward, will the usurper and the tyrant hold dominion over them.

The feeling of INSECURITY, soldiers, was that which lay at the basis of all our sectional movements. The Anglo-Saxon race has never waited until the stroke of tyranny actually descended. It has ever snuffed tyranny at a distance and armed itself against its advent. The barons who wrested Magna Charta from John, at Runnymede; the bold commoners who brought the Stuarts to the proper knowledge of a people's rights; the colonies which struck the blow against taxation without representation, all acted upon this principle. They

demanded security for their rights, and when it was not granted them, they cast their swords into the scale. None of these were suffering from any overt act of tyranny, but they perceived that principles had been advanced and sanctioned which must end in utter servitude. And this was precisely our position. We foresaw that there could be no security for us under the constitutional interpretation which had been adopted by an irresponsible and ever swelling majority; that there could be no national life for us when we were no longer reckoned as equals, but were pointed at as barbarians and lepers, carrying about with us our manifest taint of infamy. We should have been leaving to our children an inheritance of shame and a life of unceasing conflict. The time had come when it was essential that we should enter upon this struggle for life and death, that our State governments should cast over us the shield of their protection and give us, under a new government, that security which was essential to our peace and prosperity. This legitimate action has brought upon us the barbarous invasion which you are marching to hurl back upon its unprincipled projectors. The Mother of States—the nursery of heroes, of orators and of statesmen—the shrine which contains the ashes of Washington—summons you to her defence, and points you to the ruthless hordes who have dared to pollute her soil with their unhallowed tread, and to violate all the charities of civilized life. Against such a warfare you may advance, soldiers, with the assurance that you will be remembered before the Lord your God, and will be saved from your enemies. As you mingle in the strife, you will rejoice that from every sanctuary in the land the silver trumpets will be sounding and bearing your cause into the presence of Him who giveth not always the battle to the strong, but can save by many or by few.

Soldiers, this is no holiday work in which you are about to engage. For the first time will you witness the stern realities of war, and you must prepare yourselves to encounter them. Before you are labor, fatigue, hardship, privation, danger, the battle field. So far in life you have known these

things only by name. Count them not as trifles, lest when they come upon you they may find you amazed at their severe and cruel visage. They must be borne, and they can be borne with courage and with cheerfulness, but not unless you put your trust in Him "who giveth strength and power unto his people." If you call upon him, he will be with you in the day of trouble; if you acknowledge him, he will acknowledge you. And the soldier, of all men, is he who should keep nearest to his God and Saviour. No man carries, so emphatically, his life in his hand, and none, therefore, should be more ready, at any moment, to return it to his God. What men need in war, is not mere physical courage—most men have that in common with the brutes—they require moral courage to withstand temptation, to practice temperance, to endure hardships like good soldiers, to be watchful, obedient, patient, merciful. Many more soldiers perish in war from careless habits than from the stroke of the enemy—from sickness and disease engendered by recklessness, than by the sword. Military discipline, to which you are now subjecting yourselves, will force upon you this attention to temperance and moderation, but it will require moral cultivation to make you what true soldiers should aim to be. The Duke of Marlborough, the profoundest military genius England has ever produced, perceived the importance of the moral element among soldiers, and he enforced, throughout his army, the strictest attention to prayer. He never went into battle, he never sat down before a fortress to besiege it, without first calling his army to prayer; and wonderful to say, through all his long career of war—battling as he did against the most powerful monarch of Europe, and the most consummate generals of the time—he never lost a battle, nor ever raised a seige. And if, from this moment of your departure for your field of action, you would adopt this practice in your corps, of daily morning and evening prayer, of prayer upon the eve of every conflict, of thanksgiving for victory and deliverance, you might be known in the army as the "praying company," but you would certainly be known as the moral, the brave, the efficient com-

pany of your regiment. To carry with you into battle, besides your own strength, the strength of the Lord of Hosts, is to be irresistible. May you be thus doubly armed—knowing no fear, save the fear of God.

And in this contest will you be called upon, most especially, to cultivate mercy and humanity All war has a tendency to excite the passions, to infuriate the temper, and to harden the heart, but especially a war such as this, which aims at our destruction and strikes its blow at the very heart. It will be very difficult to observe the limits of Christian warfare in a conflict which is begun by summoning thieves and burglars and cut-throats to the contest. If the gentlemen of the North had come forth to meet the gentlemen of the South, all the rules of chivalry might have been observed, and this war, cruel as it is likely to be under any circumstances, might have worn the aspect of civilization and christianity. But when it has been committed to the hands of such men as haunt the purlieus of all large cities, when our homes and our firesides are threatened with pollution by the savages who have been swept together from the prisons and penitentiaries of the North, it will require an almost divine moderation to stay the arm of vengeance. But the Christian must never forget that his God has said, "Vengeance belongeth to me—I will repay, saith the Lord." Even with such enemies, let mercy and humanity predominate. Strike no more blows than are necessary for victory, and wherever and whenever the cry for mercy shall reach your ear, listen to it and grant its prayer. Let the flag under which you fight be stained with no unnecessary blood. Let no mother's heart be wrung, no sister's bosom lacerated, by your ferocity The attribute of Him, from the door of whose sanctuary the silver trumpets shall animate you to battle, is "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious." And he will bless you, if you honor his attribute of mercy.

And now, soldiers, I send you forth with the Church's benediction and blessing. Your cause is just—your leaders are skilful—your comrades are brave and earnest. Before

you, is a ruthless enemy—behind you, are your homes and your firesides. Who can doubt the issue if you will but keep the Lord on your side? Remember him always, for to him belong the issues of life and death. And we, Priests of the Sanctuary, who are not permitted to put on the armor of the warrior, will yet be with you blowing the silver trumpets in the ears of the God of battles, praying him ever to remember you, and to be your defence, now and evermore.